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JrCOSTEP – Summer 2005  
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I had a great experience at Wagner Indian Health Service. The people I met have all been extremely friendly and helpful. It is always nice to work in a friendly environment with others that care about what they do and improving the health of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. I worked out of a small hospital or clinic in Wagner, SD not far from the border of Nebraska and close to the Missouri river. It is a very small quiet town that is quite a bit slower paced then back at school. I absolutely love the beautiful scenic country and the bright blue skies.

My tasks at work varied just about everyday. The environmental health field is very broad and I learned this my first day when I was trying to rescue a lady from a snake that crawled up into her van while in our parking lot. Besides chasing that one snake I also worked on a rabies clinic vaccinating over 250 animals, epidemiological studies, West Nile virus fliers, mosquitoes breeding site reports, animal control, inspecting lagoons, inspecting waste sites, inspecting food facilities, inspecting the clinic itself, taking water samples, CPR training, mold inspections, designing fire plans for all the housing areas, working the health fair, developing a fire program and going into all the houses in our area and installing smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers. Those are just a few of the many challenges I tackled at IHS.

Things I enjoyed about my COSTEP experience besides the great people and pay? The ability to travel and see new and exciting things, canoeing down the Missouri river on the weekends, getting to observe pow wows, taking part in their annual sobriety walk, and most importantly the job satisfaction of knowing that the work and effort I put in over the summer really makes a difference in protecting the health of individuals.

Things that weren't so wonderful about my experience? I can think of small trivial things like having to deal with people that are drinking and smoking at 11:00 in the morning while I inspect their homes that haven't been cleaned in months but I look at that as a learning experience. Where better to learn about the challenges of the Native American people than on their reservation and in their homes? I got to learn about their way of life, problems, mentality and try to help them improve their situation in some ways.

There is no better way to learn or experience life and work than the hands on training I received during my COSTEP. I know I really enjoyed and appreciated my time at Wagner Indian Health Service. I strongly encourage anyone who has the opportunity to do a Jr. COSTEP to take advantage of it.

